



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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Police to kick-off National Night Out Aug. 4

*Agency will announce new programs, including Pathway Patrol Section
and HCPD Nextdoor account on social media*

Police officers and members of the Howard County community are joining forces Aug. 4 for National Night Out, an evening of events intended to generate participation and support for local crime prevention activities. Parties will kick off at 6 p.m. at Vantage Point Park in Columbia, where Police Chief Gary Gardner will announce two new community policing programs for Howard County: a Pathway Patrol Section and a new HCPD Nextdoor account on social media.

“National Night Out is an annual demonstration of the department’s strong partnership with the community,” said Chief Gardner. “Residents play an important role in fighting crime and keeping our communities safe. We are continuing to add new ways to interact directly and communicate openly with the public we serve.”

The new Pathway Patrol Section, comprised of seven officers on mountain bikes or electric motorcycles, will provide a year-round, highly visible police presence on pathways and in residential areas. The squad will work to deter crime, address quality-of-life issues and allow officers to interact more directly with community members. Officers will have maneuverability in areas not easily reached by police cruisers or that are too large to cover by foot.

There are more than 90 miles of bike paths woven throughout nearly every neighborhood in Columbia. Howard County has another 100 plus miles of trails in 9,400 acres of parkland. The goal of the Pathway Patrol Section will be to help create a strong sense of safety and security in these areas.

The department is also announcing that it has added Nextdoor to its social media platforms. Nextdoor is a private social network for neighborhoods. Community members share and receive information about issues affecting the specific area in which they live. This site will allow police and community members to communicate directly about issues, concerns and successes in their own neighborhoods.

Through Nextdoor, the police department will be able to share information on incidents, criminal activity, and public events that affect specific communities, and provide crime prevention and safety information. Nextdoor will complement the HCPD’s current social media outreach, which includes Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

In preparing for National Night Out, the police department has helped residents organize 25 neighborhood block parties throughout the county. The kick-off event at Vantage Point Park, which is being hosted by the Town Center Community Association, will include the HCPD’s two new electric motorcycles, volunteer mounted patrol, command post, McGruff the Crime Dog, live music, an ice cream social, and other activities.

Police resources will visit neighborhood parties throughout the county, including patrol officers, K9s, a SWAT vehicle, volunteer auxiliary officers, and more. For more information about National Night Out, including a list of party locations, visit the Howard County Police Department’s website at www.hcpd.org.

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